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The following reprint is made for the use of Officers of the National Guard of Illinois in connection with work in Army Instructions.

F. S. DICKSON, *The Adjutant General.*

2777-17  
DUTIES OF INFANTRY OFFICERS AND NONCOMMISSIONED  
OFFICERS IN EXTENDED ORDER AND COMBAT  
EXERCISES.

CORPORALS: Read 6b I. D. R., last paragraph I. D. R. 22, 42, 43, 75, 98, last of 103, 124, 125, 126, 127, 133 to 143, 146 to 158 (see changes). Note that the Corporal, School of the Company, is in the middle of the squad; School of the Squad (acting alone) he is either in front or behind his squad, but the Corporal during firing, either when the squad is acting alone or in company, is all over the squad.

The Corporal is now the real commander, placing himself where he is capable of handling all his men, correcting their faulty sight setting, their aiming, their use of ammunition, their use of cover, keeping them calm and intent upon the proper performance of their functions, using the rifle with all the care and precautions for effectiveness and safety as are used in range practice, seeing that they advance always at the command, fire carefully at the proper target, and use their ammunition for its fullest value. It matters little whether the Corporal use his own rifle at all. I think it best in the National Guard that the Corporal should NOT use his rifle for firing, but devote all his time and energy to the active command of his men; it is best unless his men are unusually well trained and experienced in war, and even then he will have all the work he can do without firing at all.

All officers and noncommissioned officers should understand that the handling of the rifle by the private is in accordance with the firing regulations: the sighting, the position, the aiming, the trigger squeeze, the sight-setting above all things, the elevation and deflection corrections, the use of the sling, the use of the lock, penalizing the excessive use of ammunition, attention to the whistle and oral command; these things the Corporal MUST attend to, and he must in addition watch the enemy, watch the superior noncommissioned officers and officers who immediately command him and study the ground so as to utilize its advantages and avoid its disadvantages. As the Corporal works, keeping his men calm and attentive to the performance of their duty, correcting their errors and omissions, so will the efficiency of the company be. It follows then that a Corporal must be not only superior in intelligence, loyalty and



obedience, but letter perfect in the Drill Regulations and the Firing Manual, and no amount of careful, painstaking instruction in these things will be wasted. Sergeants, under the new order, would be better off if not armed with the rifle, except for the detached action which they are constantly required to supervise and for use in the bayonet encounter. Whenever any officer or noncommissioned officer begins to fire in battle, his attention becomes wholly absorbed in his own firing and he becomes wholly oblivious to what is happening around him and while he may be firing effectively himself, the whole of his proper command may be wasting its efforts and ammunition. A sergeant should never fire when with the company, and in detached action should restrict the use of his rifle practically to self defense. Until troops are thoroughly trained and in excellent discipline, it will always be preferable that the corporals do not fire. If they use all their time for coaching, instructing and advising, the time may come when the men will be so thoroughly habituated to the proper use of the rifle that they no longer require close supervision and the corporal may then fire. It is true that with the noncommissioned officers not firing, the company loses the fire effect of some of its best shots, but the army loses the battle firing of its best shots with the commissioned officers, for, if we examine the composition of the rifle teams in the late National Competitions, we find that nearly the whole of National Guard teams were commissioned officers and fifty per cent of the Infantry, Cavalry, Navy and Marine Corps teams were commissioned officers. Note also that the Regular Army in the Department Competitions had to rule commissioned officers out of the competitions and in place of active participation, allowed to them medals equal to that of any enlisted competitor when the officers's score exceeded that of the enlisted medal winner by five per cent. But, on the other hand, note the effect of fire of excellent shots at ranges beyond those in which the danger space is continuous and when the estimation of range is erroneous (Balck, I, p. 168 et seq). Note also, that in the war strength Infantry company, there are eighteen noncommissioned officers who might fire and eighty-four privates (including artificer) who should fire, twelve squads with a corporal or lance corporal for each. The corporal should be an adept in the use of motions and signals, for though the sergeants and commissioned officers are supplied with whistles, the corporals are not and even if they were, the whistle is good only for calling attention to a signal which follows it and the corporal is close enough to all his men to immediately indicate his will, but he can not expect to do so by voice during firing, likewise he must understand the signals of his superiors, not only those of the drill regulations, but those which will be devised as circumstances require.

It is advisable in extended order in peace training, that the corporal give no oral commands except "follow me" and use the prescribed signals for all others; this for two reasons: first, that the men become accustomed to the signals; second, watching for signals requires closer attention.



SERGEANTS: What applies to the Corporal applies also to the Sergeant. The Sergeant must see that the Corporal does his duty but must also be prepared to assist the Corporal in maintaining control of his men, particularly so where any reenforcement has taken place or otherwise where the men of different units have become intermingled. It is at such occasions that disorder is created and control destroyed. Sergeants and Platoon Leaders must be ready for this and take immediate action assigning new men to squads, seeing particularly that the new men obey the corporals to whose command they may be assigned, and likewise seeing that men of their own company obey the orders of a corporal from another company when like circumstances make his assignment to the command of that corporal desirable or necessary. The tactics of Infantry require that in battle each Infantry Officer and soldier place himself under the authority of the nearest Infantry Commander. By analogy, it is the duty of an Infantry leader or commander to assume command of those nearest him without regard to company, battalion or regiment, and to forego, in battle, the command of those whom, by virtue of his regiment and company assignment, he is normally entitled to command but who have become separated from him in the incidents of battle. I abjure all infantry officers and noncommissioned officers to observe these things for they are incidents to the crisis of battle and at the time when control is most vital and ordinarily least effective.

Many of the Sergeants will be utilized as Platoon Commanders. Those who are not utilized as Chiefs of Platoons are assistants to Chiefs of Platoons and will assist platoon commanders whether directed to do so or not. Just as a file closer in close order has the normal function of correcting errors and insuring steady marching and accurate drill, so a Sergeant who has no platoon to command in extended order has the duty of preserving the calm, steady and accurate execution of battle orders and should observe and report all matters which he has no authority to control. In the main, the duties of such sergeants will be those of platoon commanders under the control and direction of platoon commanders. They are also available for detached action and may be advantageously used in the observation of fire and possibly as range finders.

CHIEFS OF PLATOONS: The Drill Regulations fix twenty-five men as the limit which one person can control by voice in action, hence the company is divided into platoons so that there shall be two to four squads each, preferably three, but never more than four; to the command of these, the Lieutenants and Sergeants are assigned in order of rank, but a vacancy created by casualty in battle would be filled by seniority in the platoon or by assignment of the captain pending the termination of the engagement, without change in the command of other platoons.

In peace strength companies, and particularly in those in which discipline and training is not yet at its greatest efficiency, I think it advisable to make platoons of two squads, normally, both for better instruction, and in order to give sergeants an opportunity for practice of their legitimate functions.



The Drill Regulations prescribe that the platoon commander has a post five paces in rear of the center of his platoon. While observing the action of the whole platoon, this is a good place to be and the voice should carry to both ends of the platoon except during moderate firing; but an active platoon commander is on the line, in the line, at both ends, and at all parts, always coaching and directing. In advances he leads, he is the first file in platoon column and ahead of the line in rushes and, when he halts or drops to cover, the platoon halts and drops to cover in line with him. The most important function of the Chief of Platoon is Fire Control. All officers and all sergeants should be thoroughly conversant with the provisions of Part III, Small Arms Firing Manual, at least the first three chapters, likewise in the Drill Regulations the following: School of the Company, paragraphs 199 to 257, 290 to 326 and Part II. This paper is not intended to take the place of such very necessary study, but only in amplification of it. The main duty of the Chief of Platoon as stated is fire control and consequently fire discipline; a certain target is assigned to him and it is his duty to so direct the fire of his platoon upon that target as to overcome the resistance of the troops composing that target; when to fire and when not to fire, the intensity of the fire, when to increase or diminish the rate of fire, the determination and changing of range, the determination of the effect of the fire of his platoon, the determination as to the possibility of advancing and the manner in which that advance can be made; all these are functions of the platoon commander as well as the supervision of the corporals and the work and control of the squads. While the Drill Regulations and References indicate that a platoon is the largest body that can be directly controlled by voice, in practice such control will be found difficult, hence the Chief of Platoon is provided with an efficient whistle, one short blast of which calls attention of the corporals to the signal which is about to be given, and troops should be trained in the conventional signals coincidentally with their general training in battle formations and technique. See I. D. R. 234. The Captain will from time to time, as he sees proper, assemble the range finders and correct the ranges given; he will also as occasion demands, change the assignment of target and otherwise direct the action of platoons in accordance with conditions.

**THE COMPANY COMMANDER:** The direction and control of the company as a whole lies in the Captain who operates through the Platoon and Squad leaders, using the best estimators, regardless of rank, as Range Finders and the Musicians as messengers and as prescribed in 235 I. D. R. The Captain points out or describes the general target for the company and the target for each platoon, making sure that the location is accurately determined and understood. In considering paragraph 247, I. D. R., one must have in mind the effect of windage and a keen appreciation of the relation of the line of sight to the line of fire, for it is evident that if a target at 1,000 yards is hit with sights directed upon it and elevation of 1,050 yards, the elevation must be less to hit the same target if an object 200 yards further is



used as an aiming point, though mathematical computation will not take the place of the observation of fire effect.

In general, the Captain supervises and directs all the advance of the company. This does not, however, prevent the advance of a subdivision in accordance with what is the known will of the Captain—that is, if it is known that the Captain desires the company to advance as it may be possible, and it is impracticable for the company as a whole to advance but a platoon commander finds that his platoon can make an advantageous rush so as to act as a key or base unit for the company, it is quite permissible and desirable that such rush be made.

THE MAJOR: Prior to formation for battle, the Major determines what, if any, additional ammunition is to be used, what companies shall compose the firing line, support and reserve, determines the order of the companies in line, points out the target, subdivides it so that each company has a definite target or objective, states the relations of neighboring troops, if there be any, gives the end to be attained by the action, states the front of companies in the firing line—that is, determines and orders the intervals between skirmishers—states the conditions of the enemy so far as known. He will also provide for flank protection if the battalion be operating alone or with an exposed flank. This, however, does not relieve the Captain of a flank company of the duty of either providing his own flank protection or furnishing connection with the flanking groups provided by the Major. Correct tactics do not permit any officer to depend wholly upon another to protect him against surprise when he can see for himself that his flank is unprotected or can not see that it is protected. The Major indicates when the fire fight shall begin but does not necessarily do this before the deployment of the battalion; in fact, it is preferable that he withhold this decision until the advance makes the hostile condition apparent—that is to say, that in the attack particularly, the time for deployment of the battalion into its company combat units will usually be at such distance from the enemy that his strength and vigor can not be so well determined as to fix the time for the beginning of the fire action. The rule is that where supremacy is sought, the least distance at which fire may be opened upon an enemy, either in attack or defense, the more effective and decisive will that fire action be, particularly if it can be brought to bear suddenly and in great volume. This is always true in the attack; on the defense, the reason for taking the defensive may be recognized inability to overcome and pursue the enemy or the orders may require that the attacking enemy be stopped or delayed, hence while we have but the one rule for the attack, that of withholding fire until arrival within effective ranges, the battle conditions of the defense may require either that they hold or delay the attacker by fire at the longer ranges, or, for the purpose of greater damage and more certainty of success in the counter attack, that they withhold their fire until reasonably certain that the range is such that they can suddenly overpower and disorganize the attacker by a



burst of well-directed fire followed up by a vigorous counterattack. Ammunition supply always governs the attack, for after the beginning of the fire action, it may be considered that there will likely be no additional ammunition through the day or at least until the termination of the action.

For the defense, it is usually considered that they have all the ammunition they can possibly use or that there are means of replenishing ammunition during the engagement. This may not be the fact, as the defender may be no better supplied than the attacker, but it is always considered that as the attacker has the physical fatigue of the advance and is consequently less accurate in his aiming and holding while the defender may have the advantage of using a rest for the rifle, the attacker must frequently advance fully exposed while the defender remains quiescent, that the defender may have availed himself of an opportunity for determining the range to all control points in the direction of the attack so as to be able to announce correct sight settings while the attacker must depend upon his best estimates followed up by subtracting his estimates of the distance advanced from that estimate. Hence there are many reasons why the fire of the defender should be more effective than for man than that of the attacker and for that reason less ammunition per man should be required for the defense. The psychology of the situation may give some mathematical advantages.

The Major may not announce the time for opening fire and the advance may be stopped at some stage and be unable to continue without supporting fire, whereupon it will become the duty of the ranking officer present to determine whether or not fire shall be opened. The following points, however, should be kept in mind:

1. Some casualties do not indicate that supporting fire is essential to further advance.

2. The first shot is frequently fired by a nervous recruit and is taken up all along the line unless strenuous efforts are exerted to prevent it.

3. The beginning of fire action is the beginning of the destruction of control, for after a man begins to fire, he looks more to himself and less to his officer.

4. Do not let your men "shoot up their nerve" or "fan the brush," both are admissions of cowardice and declarations of your inability to control them.

The first shot may be fired by an old soldier who has observed an excellent target and cannot control his desire to take advantage of it; this frequently happens where a force is creeping up unseen by the enemy and when officers and non-commissioned officers are not watching their subordinates as closely as they watch the enemy. This is a tendency which is found in all troops, and is counteracted only by constant watchfulness and perfect control and to order such firing stopped and to stop it is insufficient, the man who caused it must immediately be taken to account. The necessary rebuke is, of course, public,



and intended not only for the correction of the soldier at fault, but for the prevention of line "accidents," consequently while the language used may be most caustic, it must not transgress that unwritten rule which prohibits an officer from taking advantage of his position for the abuse of one under him, neither must offensive appellations be applied. The rebuke, in other words, is publicly and immediately administered, and should leave the soldier crestfallen and ashamed but should not stir up resentment either in him or in those who hear it, and should be effective notice to all within hearing that unauthorized firing will not be tolerated. Such things make or break discipline and the Lance Corporal is as competent to administer such a rebuke as the Captain. It does not hurt if every leader from the Corporal to the Captain takes advantage of the occasion to assist in the ignominy of the culprit.

As stated, the determination of the time for opening fire devolves upon the Major or possibly upon the Captain. It follows then that these officers should be well versed in the effectiveness of fire, as effected by range, dispersion, angle of fall of the trajectory and its relation to the slope of the ground at or near the target. A study of combat tactics and infantry fire as given in Drill Regulations, Field Service Regulations and the Firing Manual will show when and how fire may be opened by commanders junior to those mentioned. The Major follows the firing line and directs its operations and those of the support or flanking groups; without his orders, each Captain directs the operations of his company according to his own judgment and preserving his general relation to the base. Except for the Major, the firing line has no single commander who exercises supervision or control over it. The base company is not a perfect guide nor is any other company held back because the base company cannot or does not advance except that all work together in harmony and giving mutual support as one good team.

It should be remembered always that in any crisis it is the military senior present who is responsible, and he has full authority while he is senior. I hope no officer or noncommissioned officer will consider my statement that the Major is the only commander of the firing so absolutely that he will forget the provisions of the Articles of War; for, as stated, the principles of Infantry Tactics may suddenly make your commander some infantry officer you have never seen before, whose name you do not know and may never know, it being sufficient for you for the moment that he has rank and office proper to such commands.

So much for the duties of officers and noncommissioned officers. Let the corporals master the commands and signals for the maneuver and control of squads and the detailed technique of squad movements, the technique of handling the rifle and the rules of fire discipline. Let the Sergeant and Lieutenants master those things and the management of platoons, the accurate description of targets, the estimation of distance and direction, the study of topography as it may be used for concealment, for protection and as it affects the efficiency of fire, the distances at



which fire is effective against targets of varying sizes, the aiming points for moving targets, and formations which are least affected by fire at varying ranges and varying conditions of terrain. For Captains and Majors a careful study of Infantry Tactics, Infantry Fire and the tactics of the three arms, particularly that of the Field Artillery. But first and foremost for officers of all grades is the study of the drill regulations and thorough mastery of its provisions.

**THE ADVANCE:** Troops marching into battle take as careful precautions against surprise as troops marching otherwise where the enemy may be found, but while troops under the latter condition march with advance guards, rear guards, and flank guards, infantry marching into battle gets its protection either from its formation, from the posting and marching of combat patrols, or from both. The use of natural cover and fire support are also material aids. As stated, the object in the attack is to advance without ruinous losses to ranges within which effective fire can be had upon the enemy, and without the waste of ammunition in arriving at such distance.

After the Major has published his orders for the deployment of the battalion, the advance guard operations cease; it is withdrawn, and each company marching separately in the general direction of its objective must look after the protection of its own march, both towards the front and towards an exposed flank. It is not to be considered that the orders of the Major for deployment contemplate the immediate deployment of the companies into line of skirmishers. As a matter of fact, it may be considered that the occasion indicates only that the time has come when it is no longer advisable for the battalion to advance as such. It is an undenied principle of infantry tactics that the close order and column formations be retained as long as can be with reasonable safety. Though the time may have arrived in which the battalion can no longer advance in column, the companies may still advance in column. When the company can no longer advance in column platoon columns should still be able to advance and after them squad columns and column formation should be retained as long as possible, as marching in line and skirmish line unduly fatigue the soldier, who must be saved as much as possible for his real work. The rule then is column of some kind as long as possible and whenever possible so long as the fire of the detachment is not required or desired, there being an exception in which hostile fire is more effective upon a column than upon a line. Your firing manual or any good work upon infantry fire will tell you what that condition is, and as you will always be graded upon your knowledge of the use of fire and its effects, I prefer that you find it for yourselves and learn the reasons, for in searching for it you cannot avoid reading some very interesting and important facts. The company, then, marches into battle in column or line of column, always toward its objective or target, but not necessarily in a straight line toward that target, rather necessarily not in a straight line toward that target, for in order to be able to march in columns, the company must take advantage of every channel of concealment to



avoid exposure to fire. Neither does any company attempt to maintain a certain interval from the companies adjacent to it; the general direction must be preserved and the ultimate formation must find the companies at their proper positions in the firing line. Conditions of topography, however, may be said to govern almost absolutely in the march into battle, for while one company may be unable to advance without exposure, the company next to it in the line, by varying its course, may be able to continue without being observed and consequently without deploying to pass over open, exposed ground. It is to be noted that if a company is compelled to deploy in passing over open ground and may again advance without exposure, it takes up the column or formation of line of columns most convenient and expeditious as soon as it is practicable and, while one may be able to advance steadily, another may be somewhat delayed by the necessity of deployment and reassembly. Changes of formation always take time, but reassembly into at least squad column is a gain of time in marching. Unless the Major orders otherwise, one company will not wait for another less advanced provided that tactical unity of the battalion is not lost by the advancement or delay of one or more companies.

The infantry fights in line of skirmishers at such intervals as the circumstances require or permit; it also advances under direct fire of infantry in such formation, under indirect fire from artillery, infantry or machine guns; it advances in such formation as minimizes the casualties. This rule governs the formation of and distance of the supports and reserves.

I cannot add to, modify, or explain the rule governing density of formation of firing line in its relation to preponderance or superiority of fire. The rule that sufficient rifles must be employed to gain and maintain fire superiority is absolute and for the attacker this superiority must be so great as to permit advance of parts of the line. Though the requirement is absolute, the method of securing it is not. For the defense, tiers of fire may be utilized; for the attacking force, fire of position covering the advance of the infantry; to gain the density of firing line, thin lines in which the single skirmishers are so widely separated as to furnish no material target may have to be utilized. The Drill Regulations describe the advance of thin lines for the avoidance of disastrous casualties, but company commanders must be extremely careful in utilizing this method of advance that the troops do not get out of hand, that the Lieutenants and sergeants in charge of the various lines keep excellent control of the men under their charge and lead them neither short of nor beyond the desired position and that they direct their activities in the best manner after arrival upon the desired new line. For this reason, I consider that the First Lieutenant is the best officer to lead the first line, in that he has or should have the greatest professional knowledge and experience in the control of men. The latter qualification is perhaps the greatest in this tactical situation and, while in the regular service the First Lieutenant or the First Sergeant would usually best fulfill the desired qualifications, it does not necessarily fol-



low that such would be the case in a National Guard or Volunteer Company, the appointment and promotion of officers and noncommissioned officers in the various services not being necessarily governed by the same consideration.

Suffice it to say that what you cannot do in one manner, you may accomplish in another, and whatever your method of action, you must bear in mind the fact that to succeed you must keep your men under control. You must keep them always conscious and mindful of your wishes and orders, and until you take your men into action, you cannot be certain of the discipline and true character of either your best or your worst, for until your men have had a taste of battle, you must constantly work against the fear of death, which discipline and fear of disgrace only can overcome until experience in battle shows the error of the common views of war.

RUSHES: Conforming to the opinions of Balck, the recorded experiences of Solaviev and statistics of the Russo-Japanese War, our Drill Regulations prescribe 30 to 80 yards as the limit of a rush. If we consider the time necessary to fire a carefully aimed shot at different ranges, the temporary surprise of the enemy and the time for changing target from a fixed to a moving one, we may arrive at an understanding of the time that may be allowed for a rush without materially increased danger from the exposure. Balck (I, 83) gives five seconds as necessary to prepare the squad for a rush and ten to fifteen seconds to prepare the platoon and the following time for the rush to cover: 80 meters, 26-30 seconds, 40 meters, 17-20 seconds, 25 meters, 10-15 seconds. Consider also about ten seconds after the rush before aimed fire can be taken up. Three platoon rushes of 25 yards each will cost about 100 seconds of preparation and exposure without returned fire against some 47 seconds for a single rush covering the same distance. Von Rohne (Balck 1,162) gives the following average of aimed shots per minute for trained soldiers:

Range 400 meters or less 5 rounds per minute.

Range 400 to 700 meters 4-5 rounds per minute.

Range 700 to 1,000 meters 3-4 rounds per minute.

Range 1,000 to 1,300 meters 2-3 rounds per minute.

Range 1,300 to 1,500 meters 1-4 rounds per minute.

Range over 1,500 meters 1 round per minute.

Your experience on the target range has demonstrated that the firing of the first shot of a clip or series takes considerable more time than subsequent shots. Continued observations of the attaches during the Russo-Japanese War and their recorded data show that at the shorter ranges, preparation for a rush by subduing the enemies' fire took greater time but that it was possible to continue the rush for a much greater length than at more remote ranges. The British hold that it pays to make a long rush and take greater casualties on account of the difficulty of getting a rush started. Did not the subject of battle psychology dominate the subject, I would say unhesitatingly



that the length of rush should be closely related to the time necessary to change target and fire an average aimed shot at the range and that therefore, the short rush would be preferable, but it would appear that the only safe rule is to study your men, study your ground, study the enemies' fire and rush as far as you safely can without "winding" your men or subjecting them to disastrous casualties.

I consider it excellent practice in peace preparation to seek out the small hollows and humps in the ground to the front; teach the men to search these out and run to them without regard to the exposure in running, for it has a psychological value in that the soldier having fixed his intention upon rushing to a particular spot once started for it, a burst of fire about him will likely increase his speed in getting to the predetermined place rather than turn him back. Troop leaders should remember that failing to advance allows the men to believe that they cannot advance, hence any advance so that there be an appearance of constancy about it is desirable, to avoid the belief by the men that they are but holding their own and cannot overcome the enemy, for if this state of mind becomes fixed only the addition of supporting troops will likely overcome the idea.

The term "Superiority of Fire" has been seriously misunderstood. It refers to a psychological condition rather than to either a preponderance in volume of fire or to fire which predominates in effectiveness, and the correct definition of the term in its military sense would be that fire which by its effect upon the minds of the enemies' soldiers prevents them from using their own arms with reasonable effectiveness, in other words, that fire which in connection with other incidents of the action "gets the enemies' goat" so thoroughly that, for the moment, a tactical advantage over him is or may be had. For example, in the defense, without regard to the amount of fire from the enemy, if the defender prevents the further advance of the enemy by his fire, he has Fire Superiority whether the fire is that of a few men or of thousands and has not necessarily any relation in fact to the amount of ammunition or casualties of the one party or of the other.

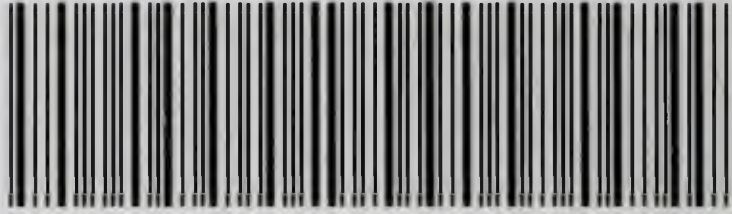


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